

Ringling society statistics

The size of the ringing population is a continual source of debate. Definitive surveys like the one thirty years ago are few and far between, but there is a regularly updated set of numbers – the membership returns that affiliated societies make to the Central Council. They don't give an exact measure but because they are regularly updated they can provide insights on how things are changing.

The caveat is that they measure society membership – so they exclude any ringers who do not belong to an affiliated society, and ringers who belong to multiple societies are counted more than once. For example, members of the College Youths, Cumberland Youths and the university societies almost certainly belong to a territorial society as well, and in the few areas where territorial societies overlap ringers may belong to both of them.

However, the double counting is less than you might imagine. Most non-territorial societies have life membership without an annual subscription, so their 'members' in the CC returns are limited to 'active' members (eg those who took part in a society event). ASCY & SRCY account for about 3% of the total, with university societies about 1.8% and about 2.4% belonging to a society whose area overlaps one of the main territorials.

The total reported to the CC in 2019 is 2.3% lower than in 2002, and if you exclude overseas societies it is 2.7% lower. However, any double counting is likely to be similar in both years so the figures should give a pretty good indication of overall change.

Predictably the pattern is not uniform. Some societies have gained, some have lost, and a few have gone up and down during the period, as shown in Figure 1, which plots membership against time for each society.

Figure 2 is more easily digestible. It shows the net gain or loss for each society between 2002 and 2019, in both absolute numbers (L) and as a fraction of membership (R).

Societies marked with a * did not provide numbers for 2017 & 2019 so I calculated the gain/loss from 2002 to 2014 and increased the fractional gain/loss to compensate for the shorter period. Societies that had more data missing are shown blank.

It is notable that the largest fractional gain was Leeds University with 85%, and that all the university societies except Oxford showed gains.

Societies whose numbers have gone up or down will have a better understanding of their situation than can be extracted from the bare statistics, so too much should not be read into the figures. For example, changes in society membership numbers don't necessarily reflect real changes in ringers 'on the ground'. A few years ago my own branch discovered that around 20% of our paying members either never rang or hardly ever rang, and what looked like a sudden reduction in the number of members on the books was partly explained by some of those who weren't ringing no longer paying a subscription.

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... Figures and tables on following pages

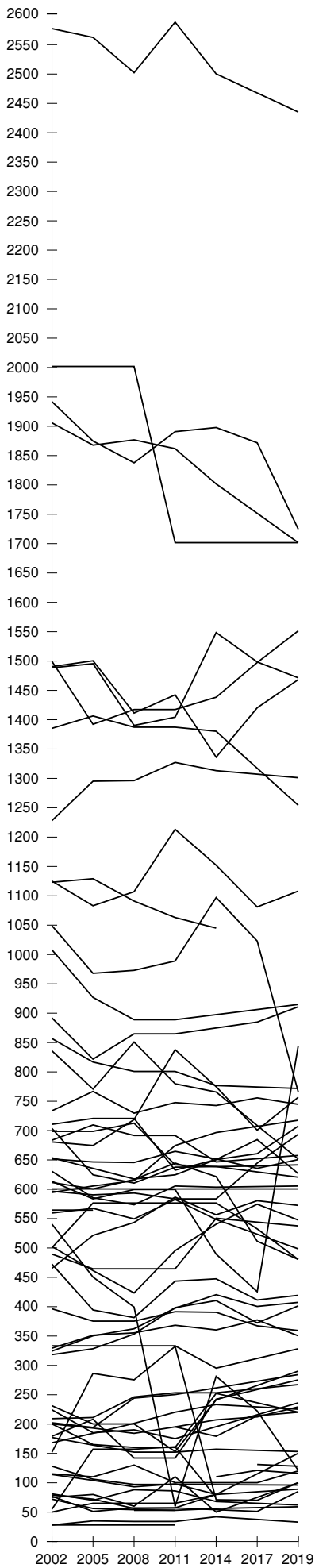


Figure 1

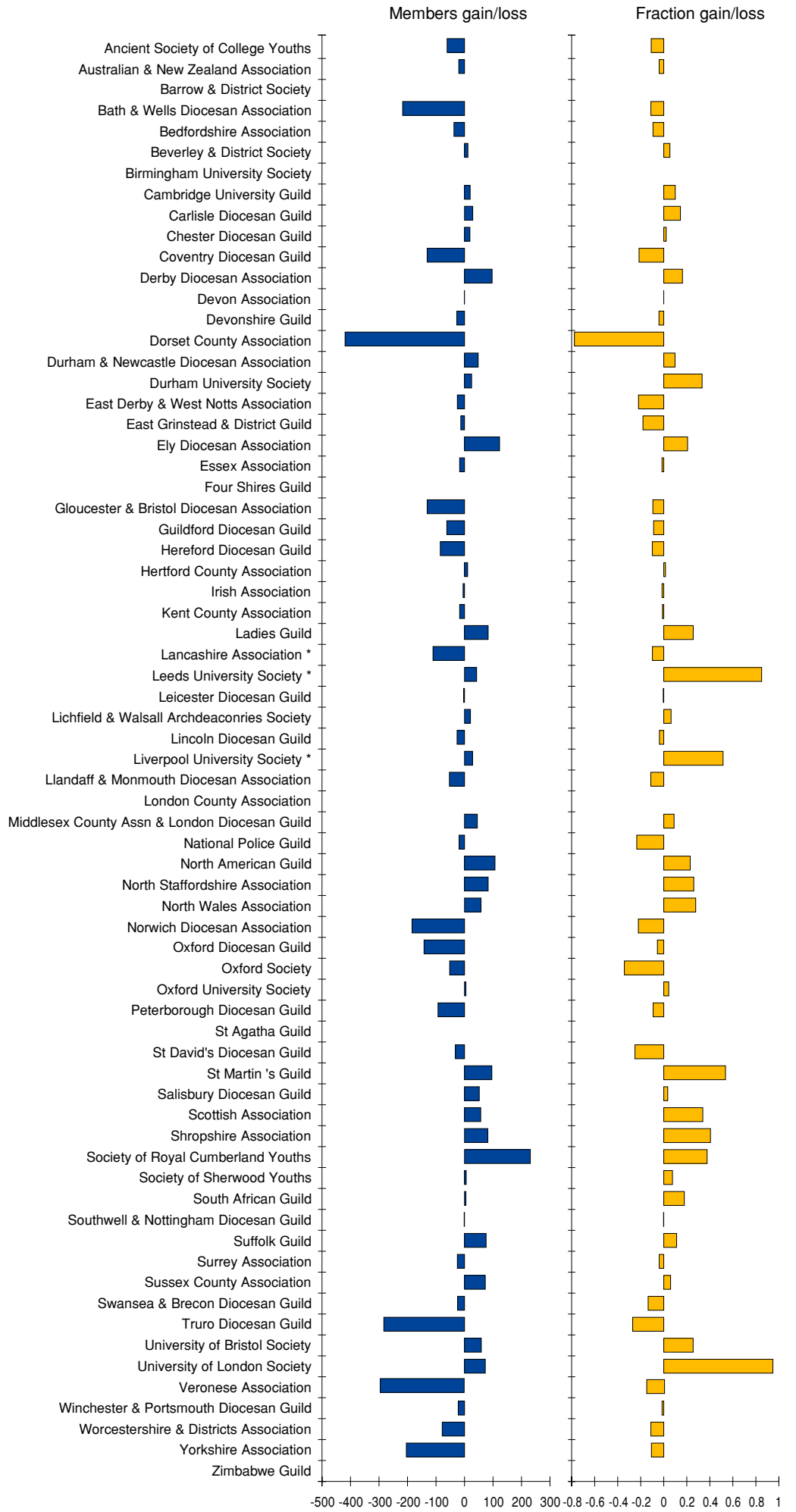


Figure 2

| | 2002 | 2005 | 2008 | 2011 | 2014 | 2017 | 2019 |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| AS College Youths | 559 | 567 | 549 | 582 | 548 | 523 | 498 |
| Australian & New Zealand A | 500 | 576 | 576 | 576 | 576 | 532 | 480 |
| Barrow & District S | | | | | 110 | 121 | 116 |
| Bath & Wells DA | 1940 | 1873 | 1836 | 1889 | 1896 | 1870 | 1723 |
| Bedfordshire A | 396 | 375 | 375 | 391 | 390 | 367 | 359 |
| Beverley & District S | 224 | 185 | 190 | 175 | | | 236 |
| Birmingham US | | | 53 | 53 | | | |
| Cambridge UG | 200 | 165 | 160 | 160 | 252 | | 220 |
| Carlisle DG | 200 | 193 | 184 | 195 | 207 | 212 | 229 |
| Chester DG | 891 | 821 | 864 | 864 | | 884 | 910 |
| Coventry DG | 611 | 600 | 616 | 644 | 621 | 511 | 480 |
| Derby DA | 596 | 590 | 593 | 583 | 583 | 644 | 693 |
| Devon A | 600 | 600 | 600 | 600 | 600 | 600 | 600 |
| Devonshire G | 653 | 635 | 617 | 624 | 650 | 684 | 626 |
| Dorset County A | 540 | 450 | 399 | 60 | 281 | 222 | 121 |
| Durham & Newcastle DA | 489 | 464 | 464 | 464 | 550 | | 537 |
| Durham US | 75 | 80 | 60 | 110 | 50 | | 100 |
| East Derby & West Notts A | 114 | 104 | 93 | 98 | 80 | | 89 |
| East Grinstead & District G | 72 | 56 | 54 | 53 | 56 | | 59 |
| Ely DA | 594 | 605 | 614 | 674 | 696 | | 717 |
| Essex A | 1124 | 1082 | 1106 | 1212 | 1151 | 1080 | 1107 |
| Four Shires G | | | | 195 | 179 | 214 | 220 |
| Gloucester & Bristol DA | 1384 | 1405 | 1386 | 1386 | 1379 | | 1253 |
| Guildford DG | 703 | 624 | 610 | 637 | | 639 | 641 |
| Hereford DG | 856 | 816 | 800 | 800 | 776 | | 771 |
| Hertford County A | 733 | 766 | 729 | 747 | 742 | 755 | 744 |
| Irish A | 333 | 333 | 333 | 333 | 295 | | 328 |
| Kent County A | 1487 | 1494 | 1389 | 1403 | 1547 | 1497 | 1470 |
| Ladies G | 324 | 350 | 362 | 397 | 420 | 400 | 407 |
| Lancashire A * | 1122 | 1128 | 1090 | 1062 | 1044 | | |
| Leeds US * | 50 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 80 | | |
| Leicester DG | 710 | 720 | 720 | 632 | 650 | 660 | 707 |
| Lichfield & Walsall S | 329 | 351 | 355 | 368 | 360 | 377 | 350 |
| Lincoln DG | 683 | 709 | 691 | 691 | 646 | | 657 |
| Liverpool University S * | 55 | 157 | 157 | 161 | 75 | | |
| Llandaff & Monmouth DA | 472 | 394 | 381 | 443 | 447 | 411 | 419 |
| London County A | 564 | 564 | | | | | |
| Middlesex County & London DG | 502 | 461 | 423 | 495 | 540 | 574 | 547 |
| National Police G | 81 | 70 | 88 | 86 | 68 | | 62 |
| North American G | 465 | 521 | 543 | 586 | 556 | 580 | 572 |
| North Staffordshire A | 318 | 328 | 353 | 398 | 410 | 372 | 401 |
| North Wales A | 209 | 211 | 246 | 253 | 253 | | 267 |
| Norwich DA | 835 | 770 | 850 | 779 | 765 | | 651 |
| Oxford DG | 2575 | 2560 | 2500 | 2586 | 2498 | | 2433 |
| Oxford S | 152 | 286 | 275 | 332 | 71 | 70 | 100 |
| Oxford US | 115 | 110 | 130 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 120 |
| Peterborough DG | 1007 | 926 | 888 | 888 | | | 914 |
| St Agatha G | | | | | | 131 | 128 |
| St David's DG | 128 | 106 | 97 | 97 | | | 96 |
| St Martin 's G | 179 | 208 | 142 | 142 | 242 | | 275 |
| Salisbury DG | 1498 | 1391 | 1416 | 1416 | 1437 | 1496 | 1550 |
| Scottish A | 168 | 184 | 201 | 220 | 233 | | 225 |
| Shropshire A | 202 | 194 | 244 | 250 | | | 284 |
| S Cumberland Youths | 613 | 583 | 599 | 599 | 489 | 425 | 844 |
| S Sherwood Youths | 79 | 72 | 56 | 57 | | 51 | 85 |
| South African G | 28 | 35 | 34 | 34 | 42 | | 33 |
| Southwell & Nottingham DG | 651 | 646 | 645 | 664 | 651 | 635 | 650 |
| Suffolk G | 680 | 674 | 718 | 837 | 774 | 700 | 756 |
| Surrey A | 630 | 585 | 573 | 605 | 603 | 604 | 605 |
| Sussex County A | 1227 | 1294 | 1295 | 1326 | 1312 | | 1300 |
| Swansea & Brecon DG | 177 | 164 | 152 | 152 | 157 | | 153 |
| Truro DG | 1048 | 967 | 972 | 988 | 1096 | 1022 | 765 |
| University of Bristol S | 231 | 200 | 200 | 153 | 241 | | 290 |
| University of London S | 77 | 51 | 57 | 57 | 80 | | 150 |
| Veronese A | 2000 | 2000 | 2000 | 1700 | 1700 | | 1700 |
| Winchester & Portsmouth DG | 1489 | 1499 | 1410 | 1441 | 1335 | 1419 | 1467 |
| Worcestershire & Districts A | 698 | 698 | 712 | 641 | 638 | | 620 |
| Yorkshire A | 1904 | 1866 | 1875 | 1860 | 1800 | | 1700 |
| Zimbabwe G | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 | | | |
| TOTAL | 38477 | 37885 | 37093 | 37697 | 36028 | 21382 | 37610 |
| TOTAL UK only | 37156 | 36425 | 35612 | 36173 | 36173 | 36173 | 36173 |